

## South Shore Conservatory Still Interested in Wright Building

Duxbury Clipper

Wednesday, June 26, 2002

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It's been over two years since the South Shore Conservatory for the Arts first approached Duxbury selectmen about using the old library, known as the Wright building, on St. George St. This week, Conservatory officials again voiced their interest in expanding their art and music programs into the historic 1905 building.

Ellison Center trustee Charlie Fargo told selectmen Monday night that the Conservatory had outgrown its present location at the old Holy Family church building on Cedar

St. and was looking to expand into the Wright building. The South Shore Conservatory owns the Ellison Center, which also houses the separate Duxbury Art Association. The Conservatory offers art, music, dance and other lessons, and also runs a preschool.

"We never expected to run out of room this quickly," said Fargo. "The response to our programs has been so dramatic. The Wright building would be a wonderful place for us to expand into."

The Wright building was given to the town by the Wright family in the early 1900s and

was the site of the Duxbury Free Library until it relocated into the Upper Alden building in 1997.

Fargo said the Wright building was perfect because of its location near the Ellison Center and the schools. However, he said "major modifications" would be required and suggested demolishing the rear 1960s addition. One issue would be to make the building, which now has five levels, compatible with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). The Conservatory is interested

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in a long-term lease so it could change the building to suit its needs, Fargo said.

Currently, the South Shore Conservatory serves 3,000 students annually and 1,000 during the school year, said Conservatory executive director Jim Simpson. Forty to fifty percent of the children are from Duxbury. The expansion would allow for additional programs, such as music therapy for students with special needs.

Simpson said the Conservatory had their architects walk through the Wright building and then they made some preliminary designs. However, he

wanted selectmen's approval on using the Wright building before moving forward with any more plans.

Selectman Andre Martecchini felt that having the Conservatory use the Wright building was a good idea, especially because it would have the funding to renovate the domed-roof structure. However, he said he knew of other ideas that had been offered for the old library, such as a youth center. He suggested the selectmen appoint a committee to investigate all options.

"While I think it's a great idea, I think we have to have our own exercise to be sure this is what we want," Martecchini

said.

When the Conservatory first approached selectmen about expanding into the Wright building in May 2000, Martecchini said he was told by Town Counsel that the town could only offer a maximum of a 10-year lease on the building.

The Conservatory would like to have next March's annual town meeting vote on a lease agreement for the building. Selectmen thought there was enough time to investigate options and take an article to town meeting 2003.

The school department has leasing the building to two programs — the Pilgrim Area Collaborative for special education and the town's adult and community education program. It has also using it for its professional development center for the schools' teachers and administrators. The building has housed these programs since 1998. They will eventually relocate to the expanded school facilities when completed.

One issue that must be cleared up is that of a deed restriction on the property. When the Wright family gave the building to the town, it specified the building must be used as a library or for library-related functions. Two years ago, Town Counsel Robert Troy stated that because the building was under the control of selectmen since town meeting vote turned it over from the library trustees, selectmen could allow "any municipal use."

Selectmen said two years ago that the town should go to probate court and clear the deed of this restriction.